




## Hosting a Cookie Exchange Party



Over the years I have given and gone to many Christmas parties, but my best memories are made during two special things I do at Christmas: my annual cookie exchange and Christmas caroling with my friends.

Just about everyone loves a cookie exchange, even if they don't have a sweet tooth. You get a chance to visit with friends, and when you leave the party, all of your Christmas baking is done. I attended my first cookie exchange in college. My girlfriends and I stayed up into the night, sharing stories . . . and calories! I decided this would be a wonderful get-together to continue after I got married and had my own circle of friends. It took me a few years after getting married, finishing college and settling into my new life as a wife and mother before I remembered the idea again.

The "Cookie Exchange Epiphany" came one Christmas when I had been baking cookies, candies and sweetbreads each night for more than a week. At the end of the marathon bake-off, I stood in my kitchen, my headband covered in flour,



knee-deep in sprinkles and colored sugar, too tired to even pour a glass of Mogan David wine. I dusted off the flour and made myself another promise: Next year, a cookie exchange! After all, I always ended up throwing out half of what I'd created when the guilts set in after the holidays.

The first year I invited eight friends who all showed up carrying the eight dozen cookies I had asked for. Unfortunately, everybody brought the same kind of cookie: peanut butter with a Hershey's Kiss on top! By the end of the night, we were all exhibiting chocolate-and-peanut-butter overload (if there is such a thing).

If you want to share some good times with your best friends this season, here's how:

*quacky*  
**Tip** When hitting all those flea markets and garage sales in the summer, keep your eyes peeled for cute plates and platters to display your cookies on—red, green or gold plates are especially festive.



## Starting a Sweet Tradition of Your Own

Picking the date is the most important detail. I like to have the party the week after Thanksgiving before all the other holiday parties start. Hosting the party before Thanksgiving seems to rush people through their turkey and stuffing. I've hosted the party at night (can you say "sugar-induced insomnia"?), and I've done it on the weekend. Sunday afternoon is my favorite time because the guys are watching football and the gals love to get away.

I like to send out a cute "save the date" postcard on July 25th (Christmas in July). An early invite gets people excited and gives your busy friends a chance to reserve



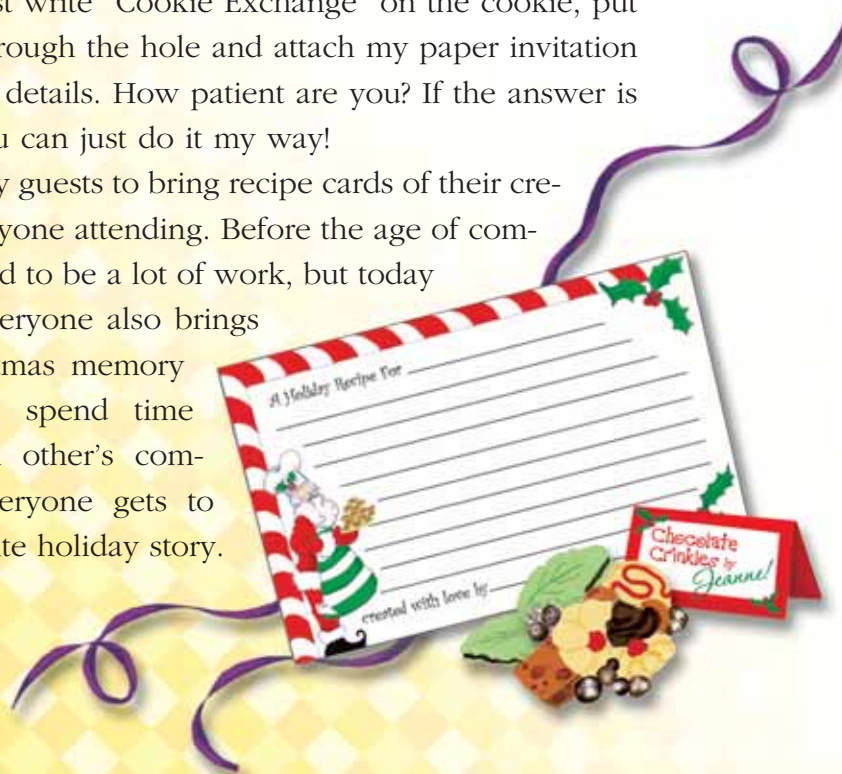


## Make Your Invite Inviting

To plan your own cookie exchange, invite each guest to bring a dozen cookies for each friend who's invited plus one more to eat on the day of the exchange. (Yes, you read that right: a dozen for each person invited plus one.)

If you're feeling very inspired, you can make your invitations out of an actual cookie. Simply buy some prepackaged dough and use your artistic skills to cut out a big Christmas tree or gingerbread cookie form. Poke a hole at the top of the cookie and bake it per the directions on the package. Once the cookie has cooled, frost it. If you have the patience of a saint, write the party details on the cookie with a tube of gel frosting. Remember, I have the patience of a gnat, so I just write "Cookie Exchange" on the cookie, put a red string through the hole and attach my paper invitation with the party details. How patient are you? If the answer is "not very," you can just do it my way!

I also ask my guests to bring recipe cards of their creations for everyone attending. Before the age of computers this used to be a lot of work, but today it's a snap. Everyone also brings along a Christmas memory to share. We spend time enjoying each other's company, and everyone gets to tell their favorite holiday story.



## RSVPs

When people RSVP, and you really need them to RSVP, they need to tell you two very important pieces of information: *if* they are going to make it and *what* they're going to make. My first couple of cookie exchange parties, I made the mistake of not asking what people were bringing; although we had fun with all the same cookies, having fun is not the sole purpose of the party. To keep track of who's bringing what, keep a cookie list by the phone. (See recipes starting on page 12 for some great baking ideas if someone can't think of what to make.)

By knowing what cookies you're getting in advance, you can create signs to put by each batch of cookies with the name of the person who made them and what they are. That way, everyone knows who did what (or who didn't have time to bake and ran to the store instead)!



I don't like my guests to leave empty-handed, so everyone gets a present. I fill a huge basket with cute gifts: cookbooks, new rolling pins, baking flour in a decorative glass jar, heart-shaped measuring spoons and cups, cookie cutters and big packages of sparkles and sugars for decorating. Everyone draws a number from a basket when they arrive, and they get to find their gift using the number. This way, I send them home with creative thoughts of sugarplum fairies.



Quacky

Tip

For an inexpensive but practical gift, give each guest a couple of rolls of cellophane with a note, "Let this jump-start your creativity — Happy Baking!"

Let's jump-start your creativity. Happy Baking!



### The Cookie-Cutter Tree: The Center-Pièce de Résistance

For a great centerpiece that really sets the mood, I decorate a table tree with old cookie cutters I pick up at garage sales, flea markets and thrift shops throughout the year. I tie each cutter with a red gingham ribbon and then hang it on the tree. As my friends leave the party, they pick their favorite cookie cutter and take it, along with the cookie recipes from the other guests, as a token of our special time together. And, of course, they're also taking with them dozens of delicious, "made-with-love" Christmas cookies.



Want a centerpiece good enough to eat? Then make a cookie wreath for nibbling on during the party. It's simple: Just arrange an assortment of cookies around a big round platter and add a red bow.



Cookies given  
with love are  
always calorie  
free!

*Jeanne*

# The Cookie Exchange

## LUNCH MENU

*Jeanne's Shrimp Salad*

*Tomato Wedges (red and yellow)*

*Salad Greens*

*Rolls (store-bought or homemade)*

*And, Oh Yes . . . Cookies*



*Peppermint Patty*


*Candy Cane Martini*

*Coffee Ice Cream Punch*



## Jeanne's Shrimp Salad

Serves 10-12



This is the way the recipe was given to me, and I'm passing it on the same way. Half of the fun is tasting it until you get it just perfect. My kids are the best tasters. They acquired a great palate by doing this!


- 1 large bag of corkscrew noodles
- 3 pounds large cooked shrimp, tails off
- 1 pint Hellmann's Mayonnaise
- 1 pint Miracle Whip
- 1 pint sour cream
- sugar, to taste (about a teaspoon)
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- 1 large green or yellow onion, chopped
- 1 envelope Good Seasons Italian Dressing Mix
- mustard sauce (optional)
- cocktail sauce (optional)

Cook the noodles until they are firm, a little longer than al dente. While the noodles are cooking, open the cans of shrimp and drain in a colander.

In a medium bowl, mix together the Hellmann's Mayonnaise, Miracle Whip and sour cream, reserving about 3 tablespoons of the mixture for just prior to serving. Add a dab of sugar to pique the flavors; add


salt and pepper to taste. To this, add sparingly a few sprinkles of the Good Seasons Italian Dressing Mix. Remember, you can always add more, but it's really impossible to take it out if you overdo it!

When the noodles are done, drain them and rinse with warm tap water. The noodles should be warm when you add the mayonnaise mixture because it will add a richer flavor. Put the noodles in a very large bowl. (I use a large roasting pan so I have enough room to mix well.) Sprinkle half of the chopped onion over noodles, and then start adding the mayonnaise mixture until the noodles are well covered. Add the shrimp and the remaining onion; mix well. Now taste. If you prepare the salad the day before you're serving it, the flavors will deepen. If you're making and serving it the same day, it should taste exactly like you want it to taste.



When you're satisfied with the flavor, add the leftover mayonnaise mixture and toss. The final salad should be the consistency of potato salad. If you make it a day ahead, the sauce will soak into the noodles, so you will have to add more sauce before serving. This recipe is so good and really worth it. You will get so much praise from the crowd.

When it comes time to serve it, I like to dabble-dabble a little mustard sauce and cocktail sauce over the top of mine. Serve with a bed of salad greens or tomato wedges.



## Chocolate Nut Squares

- 1½ sticks Parkay Spread (¾ cup)
- ¾ cup granulated sugar
- 1¼ cups flour
- 2 tablespoons heavy cream
- 1¾ cups pecans or walnuts, coarsely chopped
- 1 cup flaked coconut
- 4 ounces semi-sweet chocolate, coarsely chopped

**B**eat ½ cup of the Parkay and ¼ cup sugar until creamy. Blend in flour. Press mixture on the bottom of an ungreased 9 x 9 x 2-inch baking pan.

Bake at 350 degrees for 18 minutes or until edges are lightly browned.

Heat ½ cup sugar, ¼ spread and heavy cream in saucepan, stirring until spread melts and mixture is blended. Stir in pecans and set aside.

Sprinkle coconut and chocolate over the crust. Top with pecan mixture. Bake for 20 minutes more or until golden. Cool and cut into squares. Makes about 30 squares.

## Coconut Macaroons

I love these. We make them in the shape of a heart.

- 2½ cups shredded sweetened coconut
- ½ cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 2 egg whites
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon salt

**T**oss 2½ cups of shredded sweetened coconut, ½ cup sugar, and 2 tablespoons flour together in a large bowl and set aside. Whisk 2 egg whites, ½ teaspoon vanilla extract and ¼ teaspoon salt together until soft peaks form and then stir in the coconut mixture. Spread heaping tablespoons of the batter into 2-inch heart shapes, 1 inch apart on a parchment-lined baking pan. Bake at 350 degrees until macaroons begin to brown around the edges, about 12 minutes. If you want a real treat, sandwich between two macaroons a filling of raspberry preserves, peanut butter or hazelnut spread. Yum. Makes 36 macaroons.

## Peanut Butter Bon-Bons

These are really good!

- 1/2 cup butter
- 2 cups crunchy peanut butter
- 1 box powdered sugar
- 3 cups Rice Krispies
- 6-ounce package chocolate chips
- 1 bar of paraffin
- wax paper

**S**often butter and then mix the first 4 ingredients with your hands. Roll the mixture into bite-sized balls and place them on wax paper. Chill. In a double boiler, melt one 6-ounce package of chocolate chips and 1/2 a bar of paraffin. Dip balls one at a time and place back on wax paper. These bon-bons keep very well (if there's any left!).



## Jeanne's Caramels

Spread bottom and sides of a 9 x 5 x 3-inch loaf pan with butter. In a 2-quart saucepan, combine:

- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup light corn syrup
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cups light cream

**C**ook and stir over medium heat until sugars dissolve. Continue cooking, stirring occasionally to firm ball stage (248 degrees). Remove from heat. Stir in 1 teaspoon vanilla. Turn into pan. When caramels are cool, cut into squares and wrap each one with wax paper, then twist the ends. "Oh, yum!" Makes 3 dozen.



## Eve LaTulipe's "Lickety Lips" Chocolate Chip Cookies

**I**n my opinion, this recipe is "The BEST Chocolate Chip Recipe in the World!" Sorry, Mrs. Fields. These cookies are big-hearted and beautiful, just like the ladies who bake and love them. They cause panic attacks, withdrawal tremors, stampedes and personality changes!

These cookies never stay home. They go to visit the grand-kids. They are taken to football, baseball, basketball and soccer games. They fish. They go to family reunions and church potlucks. They go scouting. They go to cookie exchanges. They go to funerals. They go on road trips. They appear on people's desks as thank-you gifts. They go to military mail-boxes. And, they go Federal Express!

- 4 1/2 cups flour (save 1/4 cup for the nuts)
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup softened butter
- 1 cup Crisco shortening (I use one of the white Crisco baking sticks)
- 1 1/2 cups white sugar
- 1 1/2 cups light brown sugar
- 4 eggs
- 2 tablespoons Mexican vanilla or any dark vanilla (i.e., McCormick's, Adams, etc.)
- 2 cups nuts, very coarsely chopped (Stir 1/4 cup flour through the nuts to keep the nuts buoyant in the dough.)
- 1 12-ounce bag Nestlé real milk chocolate chips

Sift 4 cups of flour, the baking soda and salt together; set aside. In a large mixing bowl, place butter, shortening, sugars, eggs and vanilla and mix on low until blended. Put mixer on high for 3 minutes. Add the combined flour/soda/salt mixture and gradually stir into the butter/sugar/egg mix. With a large spoon, alternately add chocolate chips and nuts.

Refrigerate the dough in plastic wrap for at least 2 hours; overnight is best. Bake on an ungreased cookie sheet (use a flat cookie or jelly-roll pan, not air cushioned). Place 6 gobs of dough on the pan about 1/3 to 1/2 cups in size (palm size). Don't compress or mash them; leave them scooped in free form.

Bake immediately at 375 degrees, only one pan at a time on the middle oven rack for about 9 to 10 minutes. Bake until cookies are brown, but slightly undercooked in the center. When taken from the oven, let cookies sit on the baking sheet for a minute to hold their form. Carefully transfer to wire baking rack to cool.

Repeat baking with remaining dough, refrigerating bowl between pans. Makes about 2 to 2 1/2 dozen cookies (depending on how much dough you eat yourself).



## Melt-in-Your-Mouth Cookies

Peanut butter and chocolate lovers rejoice! These cookies are awesome.

- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ cup unsweetened cocoa
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup granulated sugar (plus more for dipping)
- ½ cup firmly packed brown sugar
- ½ cup unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup creamy peanut butter, divided
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 large egg
- ¾ cup powdered sugar



Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Whisk together first 4 ingredients in a medium-size mixing bowl. In a separate bowl, beat together granulated and brown sugars, butter and ¼ cup peanut butter until light and fluffy. Add vanilla and egg, beating to combine. Stir in dry ingredients, blending well. Set dough aside.

Stir together remaining ¾ cup peanut butter and powdered sugar until smooth. With floured hands, roll mixture into 26 (1-inch) balls.

Break off about 1 tablespoon cookie dough; make an indentation in the center with thumb and press 1 peanut butter ball

into indentations. Wrap dough up and over filling, pressing to seal; roll cookie to smooth it out. Repeat for each cookie.

Dip top of each cookie in granulated sugar and place 2 inches apart on lightly greased baking sheets. Use a greased bottom of a drinking glass to flatten each cookie to about ½-inch thick.

Bake cookies at 375 degrees for 7 to 9 minutes or until set. Let cool on wire rack. Makes 36 cookies.


## Butterscotch Bars

- 18 ½-ounce package butter pecan cake mix
- ½ cup softened butter
- 1 egg
- 12 ½-ounce jar caramel topping

Combine dry cake mix, butter and egg; mix well. Press half of mixture into the bottom of an ungreased 13 x 9-inch baking pan. Bake for 10 minutes at 350 degrees. Pour caramel topping over baked crust; sprinkle with reserved cake mixture. Bake an additional 20 to 25 minutes at 350 degrees until lightly golden; cool completely. Cut into bars. Makes 2 dozen.

## My Mom's Pineapple Diamonds


- 1 pound butter or margarine
- 4 cups flour
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 3 cups drained crushed pineapple
- 1 cup sugar
- 3 tablespoons cornstarch
- confectioner's sugar



Put butter into flour with pastry blender. Add sour cream and vanilla. Mix well. Refrigerate for 2 hours or overnight. Cook pineapple, sugar and cornstarch over medium heat. Be sure to stir the mixture constantly, until thick and clear. Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Roll out  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the dough and place in bottom of ungreased jelly-roll pan. Spread cooled filling over dough and top with rest of dough. Bake for 55 minutes or until golden brown. Sprinkle with confectioner's sugar. Cut into 70 squares and refrigerate.

## My Simplified Version of Mom's Pineapple Diamonds

- 2 eggs, beaten
- $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 20-ounce can crushed pineapple, juice reserved
- $2\frac{1}{4}$  cups all-purpose flour
- $1\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoons baking soda
- $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups flaked coconut (optional)
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup chopped walnuts (optional)



Combine eggs, sugar and vanilla; stir in pineapple with juice, flour and baking soda, coconut and walnuts (if using). Pour into a greased jelly-roll pan; bake at 350 degrees for 20 to 25 minutes. Spread vanilla glaze over top while still warm; cut into bars. Makes 3 to 3  $\frac{1}{2}$  dozen.

## Vanilla Glaze

- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup evaporated milk
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup margarine
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Mix all ingredients together and bring to a boil. Cook for 30 seconds.

## Snowmen Cookies

**T**hese cute snowmen cookies make great treats for children's parties. Kids are always willing to chip in and help decorate them!



- 1 16-ounce package Nutter Butter cookies
- 1/4 pounds white candy coating, melted
- miniature chocolate chips
- MMMs miniature baking bits
- pretzel sticks, halved
- orange and red decorating gel or frosting

Using tongs, dip cookies in candy coating; shake off excess. Place on waxed paper. Place two chocolate chips on one end of cookies for eyes. Place baking bits down middle for buttons. For arms, dip ends of two pretzel stick halves into coating; attach one to each side. Let stand until hardened. Pipe nose and scarf with gel or frosting. Makes 32 cookies.



## Pumpkin Cookies

- 2 cups sugar
- 2 cups butter
- 2 eggs
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 15-ounce can pumpkin
- 4 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon nutmeg

**C**ream first 4 ingredients together; stir in pumpkin. Mix well; set aside. Sift remaining ingredients together; gradually mix into pumpkin mixture until well blended. Drop by teaspoonfuls onto greased baking sheets; bake at 350 degrees for 10 to 15 minutes. Cool and frost. Makes about 8 dozen.



## Candy-Cane Cookies

- 1 cup sugar
- $\frac{2}{3}$  cup margarine, softened
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup egg substitute
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon almond extract
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon food coloring

**B**eat together sugar and margarine until creamy with an electric mixer at medium speed. Beat in egg substitute and extracts; set aside. Mix flour and baking powder; stir into margarine mixture. Divide dough in halves; tint one half with food coloring. Wrap separately; refrigerate for 2 hours. Divide each half into 32 pieces. Roll each into a 5-inch rope. Twist together one red and one plain rope and bend end to form candy canes. Place on ungreased baking sheets. Bake at 350 degrees for 8 to 10 minutes until golden. Remove from baking sheets; cool on wire racks. Store in an airtight container. Makes 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  dozen.



## Candy Cane Martini

- finely crushed peppermint candy
- $\frac{1}{2}$  ounces vodka
- 1 ounce peppermint schnapps
- small peppermint candy canes

**L**ightly wet the outside rim of a chilled martini glass and dip it in the crushed peppermint. Shake up the vodka and peppermint schnapps and pour into your chilled martini glass. Hook a small candy cane on the rim.

For guests who are not martini drinkers, you can make coffee ice cream punch. (See page 17.)



## Peppermint Patty

gingerbread crumbs  
1½ ounces vodka  
1 ounce Godiva Chocolate Liqueur (okay, make it a little more!)  
splash of peppermint schnapps  
bite-size chocolate-covered peppermint patty (like a "York")

**L**ightly wet the outside rim of a chilled martini glass and dip it in the gingerbread crumbs. Shake up your mixture of vodka, Godiva and peppermint schnapps. Pour into the chilled martini glass. Put a small cut in the peppermint patty and hang it on the edge of the glass.

## Coffee Ice Cream Punch

3 cups strong coffee (cool)  
1 gallon vanilla ice cream  
1 pint whipped cream

**M**ix all ingredients together at the last minute. This is a great "women's get-together" punch!